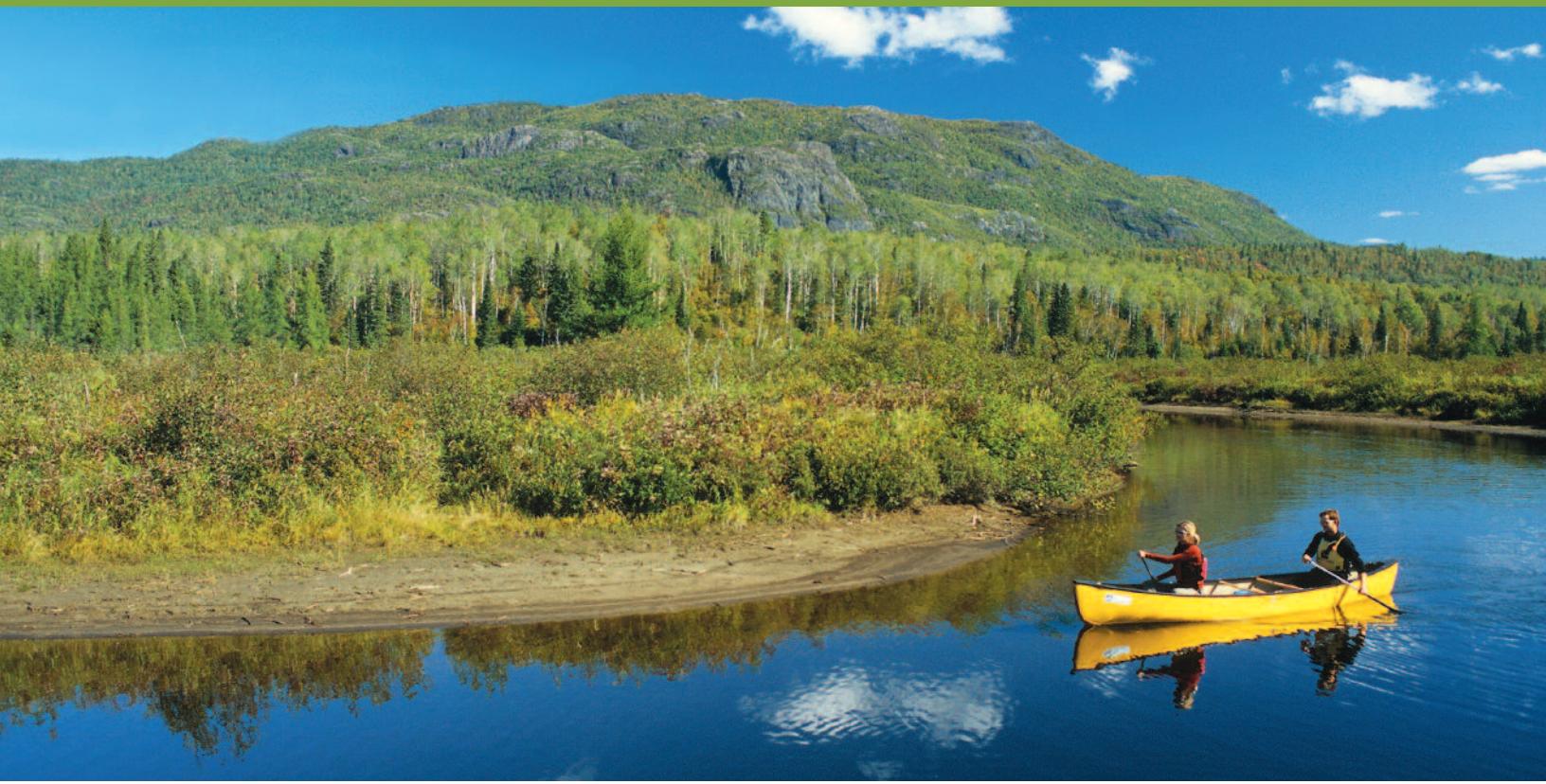


# SAFETY GUIDE RIVER TRIPS

RÉSEAU  
**Sépaq** 



Canoeing, kayaking or rafting downriver involves certain risks. This activity takes place in natural settings, which are, as a consequence, farther away from emergency services. This can cause delays in the event of incidents requiring immediate care or an evacuation.

Be sure you have the necessary skills and abilities and the appropriate equipment for practising this activity. Paddlers must be aware of the potential risks, which include the possibility of material damages, injuries and drowning. We advise you to read this document attentively.

You should always choose an excursion based on your abilities, fitness level and river skills. A river's level of difficulty is classified into five (5) levels, ranging from Level 1 (very easy) to Level 5 (very difficult). Paddlers must consider these classifications along with the classification of the river's rapids before making a choice. The number of portages and the distances involved are also part of the equation.

For general information about the different rivers and for maps, call 1 800 665-6527. To better plan your activity and for additional information and preparation advice, we suggest you call Fédération québécoise du canot et du kayak at 514 252-3001 or visit their Web site at [www.canot-kayak.qc.ca](http://www.canot-kayak.qc.ca), and read the "Sécurité" section. You can also contact the Office of Boating Safety at 1 888 649-6292 or [www.tc.gc.ca/marinesafety/debs/obs/menu.htm](http://www.tc.gc.ca/marinesafety/debs/obs/menu.htm).

**It is important to note that these trips are not guided, and that you are responsible for your own safety.** There are no patrols on the rivers or along the banks. Expenses for search and rescue operations are your responsibility (make sure that your insurance covers these risks before leaving on your trip).

We suggest that you read the *Careful by Nature* brochure, available at our reception offices, and give a friend or relative a copy of your itinerary, making sure to let this person know your return date, with instructions to call emergency services (911) if you do not arrive on the expected date. To prevent false alarms, call this person as soon as you get back.

## FORMALITIES

Before making your reservation, get information about the characteristics of the trip you're planning (length, degree of difficulty, departure and arrival points, services).

Read the documentation that comes with your rental contract to become familiar with the details about the activity.

You must register at the establishment's reception office and have your park entry fee pass and stay authorization on hand when you arrive for your trip.

If you plan on fishing, first make sure that fishing is allowed. If so, bring along your fishing licence and find out how many catches are allowed per day.

## SAFETY AND COMMUNICATION

Rivers can involve many natural dangers, notably differences in water level, currents, rapids and obstacles (tree trunks and branches on the surface, siphons, log jams, overhanging and densely wooded shores, moving gravel bars and rocks.).

Paddlers should get information about the potential dangers before starting out on an excursion and must remain vigilant and able to manoeuvre the boat to avoid these obstacles.

When navigating rapids that are classified 3 or higher, we recommend that you wear a helmet, and that your canoe, kayak or raft be equipped with an added float.

### Tips

- *Make sure that your life jacket's conforms to the 65-GP-11 Standard for Personal Flotation Device, published by the Standards Council of Canada.*
- *If you are unable to swim, tell the people you are travelling with.*
- *Take the time to secure your watercraft to a tree or rock when you are on land.*
- *Designate an experienced member to remain behind the group. This person will be responsible for staying with the slowest members of the group.*
- *The isolation of the areas and the topography of certain valleys limits the use of cell phones or satellite phones. Despite this fact, we recommend that you bring a communications device with you.*

## WEATHER CONDITIONS

Weather conditions can change quickly and cause abundant precipitation, which can significantly increase the degree of difficulty of certain key passages of a river.

Wet weather and temperatures close to the freezing point can increase the risk of hypothermia and death.

### Tips

- *Before your departure, it is important to find out about the river's water level and the weather forecast for the river's entire drainage basin.*
- *Heavy precipitation at the head of a river can have consequences on its level of difficulty for dozens of kilometres downstream.*
- *In stormy weather, to protect yourself from lightning, take shelter in a wooded area.*

## CLOTHING

Make sure to wear appropriate clothing. Because of weather conditions or the time of year, some rivers can be very cold. Falling into cold water can provoke hypothermia. The first indication of hypothermia is trembling. Heed the warning signs! Dry clothing, a warm non-alcoholic beverage and food are effective remedies.

Waterproof or neoprene clothing are highly recommended for warmth. Neoprene socks or boots will also keep your feet warm.

Wearing isothermal clothing is necessary when the water temperature is below 15 °C.

### Tips

- *Don't dress for the air temperature, but for the temperature of the water you are navigating.*
- *Before crossing a difficult passage, make sure your clothing is correctly fastened so as to reduce water infiltration in case of a false manoeuvre.*
- *If your glasses get fogged up, this is usually a good indication that your body temperature has increased too quickly. If this happens, you can reduce the intensity of your paddling, the number of layers of clothing, or simply ventilate your clothing to let some cool air in.*
- *If you are taking a portage trail, remove your waterproof clothing in order to be more comfortable and avoid damaging it.*

## ON THE RIVER

A change in weather conditions (temperature, precipitation) or your physical condition can greatly alter the level of difficulty and your reflexes when navigating rapids.

Rivers and portage trails are usually indicated with signs or markers. However, vegetation or high water can make the signs or markers less visible. Canoers can therefore easily lose their way. It is essential for one person in the group to be familiar with reading topographical maps and using a compass and/or GPS, as well as interpreting currents and indicators of more difficult passages (the body of water is becoming narrower, sounds, a change of colour on the water surface, etc.).

### Tips

- Choose a route that takes your fitness level into account as well as your experience, the weather, and the river's water level. Respect your technical skills.
- Rather than risk capsizing while trying to cross a rapid, a portage is often the safer choice.
- Leave early, travel with a group (min. 2 boats) and travel only during daylight hours.
- Everyone aboard the watercraft must wear an appropriately sized individual flotation device or a life jacket licensed for sale in Canada.
- Wearing sunglasses and a hat allows you to have a better view of the water and potential problems.
- Before tackling a difficult passage, take the time to examine the area by placing your watercraft upstream of it. Decide where you would like to cross and identify markers (a large rock that appears on the surface, tree beside the river, etc.).
- Investigating a difficult stretch of water from the land must be done safely. Your shoes could be more slippery than hiking shoes, and vegetation can hide holes between roots or rocks by the river. Always go with a partner.
- If you would like to risk a difficult passage, make sure to identify the safest route to take. Ask one of your companions to wait for you downstream, and if you capsize to help get you and your boat to safe ground.
- Before crossing a delicate passage, make sure the whole group is together.

- It is important for your baggage to be well secured inside your boat so you won't lose anything if it capsizes. The weight of your baggage will also make the boat more stable for crossing more difficult passages.
- Do not underestimate the energy you'll need to cross a portage.

## FOOD

If you eat well and stay hydrated, it will be easier to maintain a comfortable body temperature. This way, you will have more energy for your trip and be more alert when facing the unexpected.

### Tips

- Be sure that your food and beverages are easy to reach while you're on the water.
- Drink at least 2 litres of water per day.
- Warning! Even if the water in the river is clear, it may not be potable. It may contain harmful micro-organisms, which can cause gastrointestinal problems. For your safety, we recommend that you boil, treat, or filter the water.
- Once per hour take the time to stop in a comfortable place or enjoy a peaceful spot while you eat and drink.
- Never take or be under the influence of drugs or drink alcoholic beverages while doing the activity.

## TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT

No matter what the brand name, model or price of the different technical equipment you use during your excursion, it is important to be familiar with them before your trip.

Boating regulations require you to have the following safety equipment aboard at all times:

- *An individual flotation device for each person, which conforms to the 65-GP-11 standard of the Standards Council of Canada,*
- *One buoyant heaving line no less than 15 m (49 ft) in length,*
- *Oars or paddles,*
- *A sound-signalling device (whistle),*
- *A bailer.*

It is extremely dangerous to overload your boat, whether with passengers or equipment. This can have serious consequences. The number of people your boat can safely carry depends on the type of boat and how the weight is distributed.

### Tips

- *Choose watertight bags or containers based on the weight and volume of your baggage.*
- *Spreading the weight evenly in the boat improves its stability, ability to glide on the water, and the way it handles in more difficult spots.*
- *Plan how to attach the baggage inside your boat and how you will carry it during portages.*
- *Attach your glasses to your head just in case!*

## PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Boaters should bring all of their garbage out with them. This rule is in effect on the water, the portage trails and the campsites.

The forest environment must be preserved, so do not cut down or mutilate trees.

During your trip downriver, you will be travelling through the habitats of a number of wildlife species. By nature, these animals are not very aggressive, but if you try to get too close to them, their survival instinct could be expressed by dangerous behaviour.

### Tips

- *Avoid bringing useless packages that increase the weight and volume of your baggage.*
- *Use biodegradable soap and rechargeable batteries.*
- *Be sure to make the least possible impact on the environment during your stay.*
- *During a portage, if you notice evidence that bears have recently been in the area, continue hiking and make plenty of noise (raise your voices, ring a bell, etc.).*

# SAFETY GUIDE COMPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

## HOW TO PREVENT...

### A fracture, dislocation or a sprain

- We suggest that you move slowly, without straddling over obstacles. On rugged or slippery surfaces, it is best to use a walking pole. Despite these precautions, if you have an accident, apply cold compresses and stabilize the injured part of the body.

### Blisters

- Don't leave on a hike without having walked for about fifteen minutes, several times, in your new shoes. At the time of the hike, keep your feet dry and protect the areas susceptible to blisters with an elastic adhesive bandage. Despite these precautions, if you get a blister, apply a bandage so the blister won't burst in order to keep the area sterile and give the skin time to heal. If the blister bursts, disinfect the wound and cover it with antibiotic cream and a bandage.

### Snow blindness

- Wear sunglasses with adequate UV protection, even when the sky is overcast. Despite this precaution, if you get snow blindness, keep your eyes in darkness.

### Serious or benign wounds

- We recommend wearing simple clothing and adjusting your backpack before leaving. You should also always handle equipment such as knives, axes or stoves with care. Move slowly but surely over rugged or slippery surfaces. If an accident occurs despite these precautions, disinfect the wound with an antiseptic and protect it with a bandage. Serious wounds must be protected from infection by sterile compresses, and they require medical attention.

### Leaving a friend alone in the forest

- We recommend going on your trek in a group of at least three people. Despite this precaution, if this happens, never abandon an injured person except in the case of a force majeur. Use your energy to comfort the injured person and make a fire to identify your location with smoke.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET LOST

To prevent this situation, never leave the trail and check your location regularly, using your map. If you are not sure where you are, stay calm, stop and take a few minutes to analyze the situation. Then, return to a spot that is easily identifiable on the map: a road intersection, a body of water, a bridge, a building or a direction sign. Analyse the situation again. If you are lost, stay where you are and wait for help. However, if you are absolutely sure of your route, make the decision to continue on or to turn back.

**Warning! Off the trails, hikers always have a tendency to over-evaluate their hiking speed. It rarely exceeds 2 km/h.**

# WHAT TO BRING

FORMALITIES	
Stay authorization	
Park entry fee pass	
Fishing licence (if necessary)	

SAFETY AND COMMUNICATION	
Individual flotation device that conforms to the 65-GP-11 standard of the Standards Council of Canada	
Buoyant heaving line no less than 15 m (49 ft) in length	
Bailers	
Extra paddles or oars	
Safety helmet	
Sound-signalling device or appliance (whistle)	
Communication device (Cellular or satellite phone)	

FOOD	
Bring enough food for the trip	
Water filter	
Canteen for drinking water	
Thermos for hot liquid (fall)	

TRAVELLING	
Topographical map specific to your itinerary (in a watertight cover)	
Compass with magnetic declination of the area you are visiting	

METEOROLOGY	
Thermometer	

CLOTHING	
Sun hat	
Extra clothing in a watertight bag	
Practical clothing (favour synthetics and multi-layered items)	
Shoes for the portages	
Isothermal clothing	

TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT	
Sun glasses	
First aid kit	
Sun screen	
Waterproof matches	
Multi-purpose knife	
Survival kit	
Watertight bags or barrels	
Cords or elastics	
Tarpaulin	
Insect repellent (28% DEET)	
Insulating ground mattress	
Lip balm	
Personal items (toilet paper)	

ENVIRONMENT	
Biodegradable soap	
Bags for carrying out your garbage	